

— VOLUME I —

Welcome to vol I.

The first collected writings of the cascadia urban-rural coalition.

We spent the winter, well, wintering. Hibernating, resting. Noticing what opportunities winter gives: less leaves on the trees so we can see the birds, trying to find all of the uses of beets.

Now we're trying to honor the call of spring: emergence, world building, putting out buds and starting to photosynthesize again. It's cotyledon season.

We hope you enjoy this seedling of a zine. Our intention was to motivate ourselves to reflect on where we are and the work we've done and to share this. To lean into the power of putting intentions into the world. To stretch our leaves to the sun. And to greet whoever we might find— so thanks for picking this up and giving it a look.


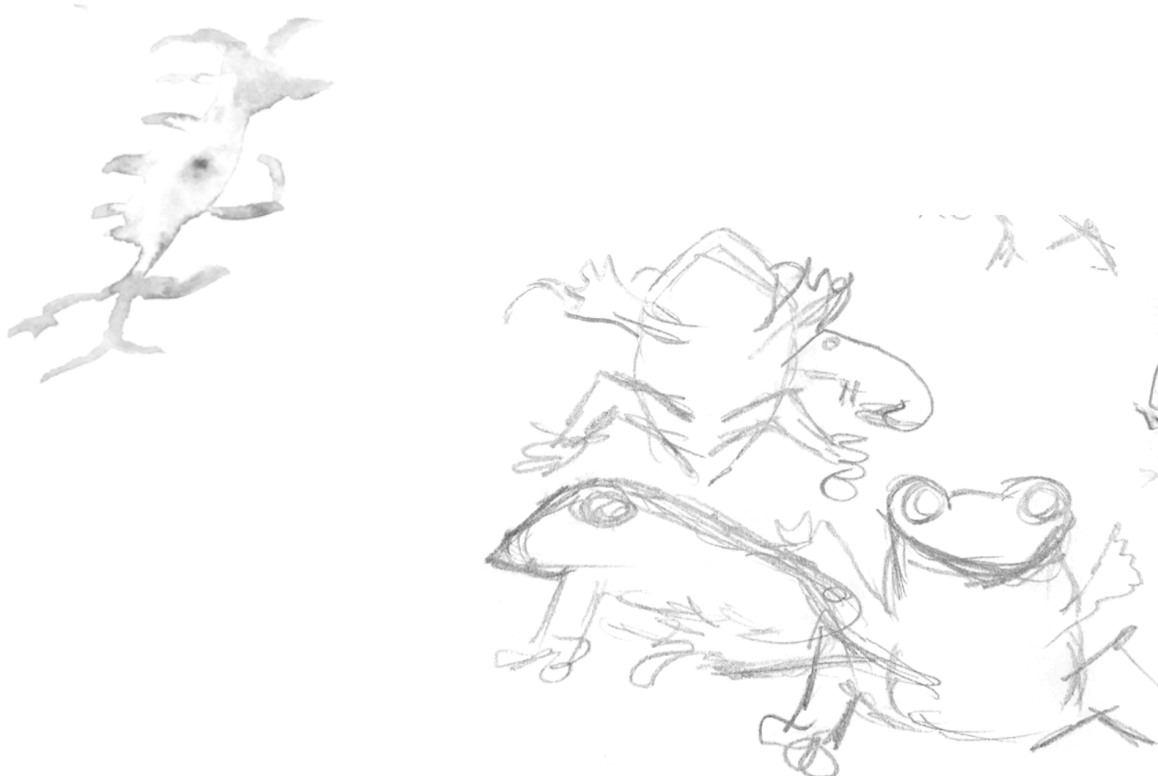
And of course, we hope you consider getting connected and joining up with us in this work ...  ... See the back cover for info on that.

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WHO IS CURC?
(Cascadia
Urban-Rural
Coalition)

The Cascadia Urban-Rural Coalition exists to grow solidarity and community between the urban working class and rural communities through the mutual need for a regenerative, inclusive, local economy and the human labor to grow it. We work and fight to defend the land we love. As a nonwhite-led group, a key consideration of CURC is ensuring that people of color, particularly black and Indigenous people, who have been fighting for a very long time for the right of self-determination, find it in this place. Our overall interest is building power in the service of decolonized, sustainable society in the Cascadia bioregion of Turtle Island.

CURC is not an idea or set of words. We're a living organism, composed of dirty, social animals whose skin colors and cultures and sexualities range widely. A mycelial network. We are composed of farmers, shepherds, artists, warriors, healers, industrial workers, writers, hunters, seamstresses, nomads, and more.

We are a movement for folks who want to do just about anything related to building the commons, working the land, producing goods locally, or defending the land. We serve the land of this bioregion and abide by our stated set of principles. In general, anything that serves those causes is something we're interested in fucking

around with. So far, we've brought work parties to certain local farms (ones serving the people of Seattle), partied and ate together, hosted skillshares, put up street art, and more. This has all been with a focus on helping build food systems in a real way; for example, being labor to help create new farms or fight to keep existing ones from shutting down. But there's lots more ways, now and in the future, that we activate.

We want to be a "creativity engine", bonded deeply on the affinity group level with a common structure and common principles, but loose enough to allow for local variation on ideas and techniques being generated. The beating heart of our group is our relationships with each other and with other people fighting the good fight, relationships built through work parties on farms, food bagging sessions in the city, and shared meals. In working to experiment with social structures ranging from cooperative business to community-based defense to nomadic commons, we seek to do our part to (re)build a society in Cascadia that is sincerely decolonized and regenerative.

Our mission is rooted in food systems the same way human existence is rooted in food systems. The fundamental but not the end. We start there because a) we still gotta eat, even as industrial ag breaks down b) it continues to be our greatest exposure to the rest of the ecosystem! When working the land one is, or should be, necessarily in touch with that land, when it floods, which

birds are around, the direction of the sun. It's similar to hunting or gathering or fishing in that to do it right you must be connected to the nonhuman peoples.

CURC is not alone in these interests. We are in relationship with plenty of urban farms, food collectives, and others in Seattle that are seeking to alleviate or adapt to the climate crisis and/or fundamental racial disparities. Many of our peer organizations are, like us, power-building in nature. In many ways, we view ourselves as the "rural wing" of our ecosystem of Seattle orgs, working to build communal, militant relations with people fighting a similar fight in rural Cascadia, for now mostly in Western Washington. Way we see it, to achieve our collective goals of regenerative, decolonized, equitable society, urban and rural people are gonna have to unite to build local economy and culture.

Also it's fun to get outta the city, dig some soil, plant some plants, be wild, occupy land, trip, work. Fuck the state. But we've got a long way to go before we don't need it. Join us.



Principles ~ Values

1. Abiding connection to and respect for the Land we call home and all the other Peoples that inhabit it
2. A commitment to racial equity and local, regenerative economy that is power-building in nature
 - a. We're not asking the government or whoever for anything, we're building or growing or taking it
3. Work together, party together; CURC is relationship and ritual
4. Small is beautiful
5. A militant movement in defense of people and place



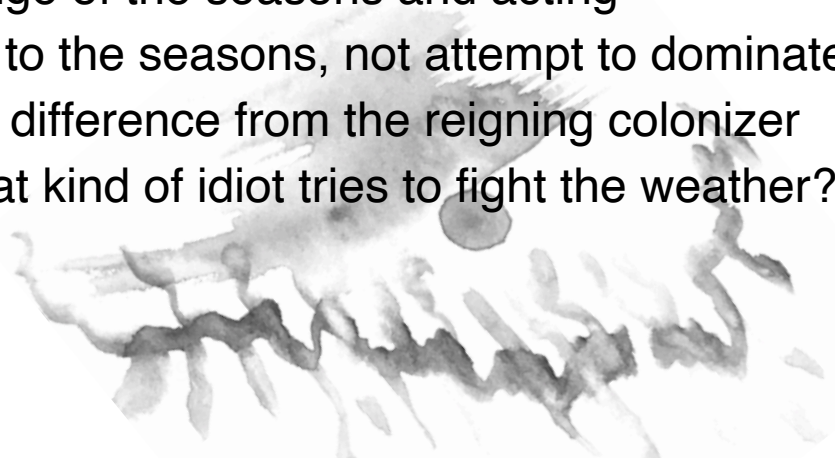
On seasons

It's close to Halloween 2021. After several days of mild but persistent storms swept off the Pacific, the clouds clear in the evening to reveal on the Cascades a light dusting of snow, above maybe 4000 feet. The season's turning and it is wet and chilly here in Seattle. The sky is prismatic and feels like an injection of serotonin. I feel in myself and my peers a slowdown, a stiffness that demands rest and I want to give it. Because it's in apparent rest that we heal, we learn, we grow, we make connections. But the cult of productivity knows no rest. I don't know if people subconsciously follow the seasonal patterns of rest and renewal anyways; it sure feels like it in spring, when folks here come out of their odd social hibernation (exacerbated in 2020 by covid), but consciously, in designing a system or a system of systems I'm asking myself how should we work this in? CURC is supposed to be a mindset, a shared set of values, just downstream from a shared spirituality so it seems to me we should emulate these values in our work. To slow when the weather cools and decay as it humidifies.

In the dry season, the mycelium grows underground, binding together disparate elements, secreting enzymes to digest the new dead matter, and building chains of polysaccharides. In the wet season it pops up as mushrooms.

Not a perfect analogy, but in a geographic sense the equivalent we've adopted in the 2020 - 2021 season is to move outward into the Land in spring, making new connections. We then, in the summer, worked with some of the farms and urban projects we decided to support as family, providing labor to them, and community and gleaned food to our "volunteers" or people who decided to believe in us and come work and play under the sun. In fall, we've slowed, taking stock and just resting some. In fall/winter it's looking like we're focusing inwards, on, for example, some of our education/outreach goals in the city (like Fermentation Day). Some of our threads are doing research, like on how to start a co-operative business. Thinking about it, having parties indoors focused around having fun and strengthening connections we've made during the summer seems smart. Since winter is mild in Western Washington, maybe some outdoors trips (in both senses) in the lowland? You get the point. The theme the feel the vibe of what we do must be oriented to the geography and weather of the Place. This is obvious indigenous wisdom.

We're actively experimenting in many domains. One of them is noticing our response, as one of many in the ecosystem, to the change of the seasons and acting accordingly. To submit to the seasons, not attempt to dominate them, is a fundamental difference from the reigning colonizer logic of capitalism. What kind of idiot tries to fight the weather?



Market Day

Today
The markets noise assaults my thought-palace
Squawking chickens hurt my ears!
Bartering makes me stress sweat
A mom scolds her child loudly

Oh I wish I was home
Where it's safe and quiet
My computer humming
My cat purring
My amazon order
On its way

Far from discomfort
Far from the black grime, and
Dirty grit
Of the Market Day@sxiaxolotl

Far from young lovers' shy glances
And older lovers' sly ones
From brilliant Sunday morning light which
Lances windowpane to windowpane, landing finally on a weathered
growers rough hands
Dark with that same liquid gleaming
Calluses thicker than my macbook air
Passing psychedelic stewarded carrots gruffly to a fair woman who will
eat them alone in her apartment and think my same thoughts;

If only we could connect the dots
If only there was some way out of my thought-palace



Re-envisioning the commons

“A political demand/action must be judged not only from the perspective of its goal, but also, and more fundamentally, from its capacity to generate unity and organizational potential among those who challenge and struggle against capitalism.” Silvia Federici

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**Our perspective is that of the planet’s commoners: human beings with bodies, needs, desires, whose most essential tradition is of cooperation in the making and maintenance of life; and yet have had to do so under conditions of suffering and separation from one another, from nature and from the common wealth we have created through generations. — The Emergency Exit Collective, The Great Eight Masters and the Six Billion Commoners, 2008**

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Among the many changes brought forth by the pandemic has been the acceleration of an already intense socio-political trend: neofeudalism. This term is thrown around a lot these days, but what does it mean? In many ways, it is the evolved/Frankenstein version of neoliberalization that took hold in the late 1970s.

Neoliberalism was characterized by the privatization of public spheres, the financialization and speculation of every economic sector and asset, the destruction of labor rights and creation of the gig economy, the repealing of governmental regulations, the proliferation of private equity firms, hyperglobalization and the creation of the global market, the death of domestic manufacturing, the acceleration of automation, and so much more. In short, the goal of neoliberalism was to “free up” the movement of global

capital by destroying its barriers (i.e. local autonomy, domestic protection and regulation, historic ways of being). It was these forces which paved the way for the crisis of 2008.

When the global markets crashed in the Fall of 2008, world governments had two choices of how to respond: Side with the people or side with the bankers and big capital. They chose the latter. Through the process of quantitative easing (essentially the creation of trillions in new capital by reducing interest rates to near 0%), they kept the financial system alive and kicking. But this system was still rife with the contradictions that had led to its near demise, and was now being kept artificially breathing. By avoiding its necessary and inevitable death, the neoliberal economic order began to mutate into something even more grotesque.

The phrase “too big to fail” was coined in 2008 to describe the financial giants hanging onto survival by a thread, but it can now be extended to the majority of our economy. Businesses like Uber, WeWork, Twitter (and all the other insufferable startups) have never been profitable, yet they continue to grow and grow. Why? Because after 2008 there was so much cheap capital in the hands of the uber-rich that had to be parked and invested somewhere, and that’s largely been in the startups that defined so much of the 2010s. The ability to consistently lose millions of dollars and continue to expand, while exploiting gig labor and not having to pay the associated costs of an actually employed workforce created an unstoppable competitive advantage for these massive companies. As they grew to gargantuan proportions and obliterated the markets for thousands of local businesses, millions of people were forced to become gig workers. At this point, nearly 40% of the American labor force is in the gig economy. These

money-hemorrhaging companies are truly too big to fail, meaning the spigot of cheap capital to them cannot be turned off.

The more the working class becomes reliant on the gig economy, the more their ability to organize and work in united struggles erodes, the less they own their labor. But this is just a microcosm of a larger trend. In every sector, things are moving from an ownership model to a renting model. Across the global south, and in indigenous lands throughout the northern hemisphere, basics of survival, such as water, are increasingly being privatized and rented back to the captured populace at exorbitant rates. What we see here in the PNW is the most sanitized form of an imperial economic violence which has mercilessly eradicated the livelihoods and ways of being for millions, if not billions, in the non-white and non-wealthy parts of the world.

That is not to minimize the horror of what is happening in our corner, and to our lives. As many of us saw first hand, the pandemic led to so many of the last vestiges of locality and common spaces shuttering for good, allowing the forces of global capital to sweep in and privatize/commoditize that which once existed for the public. Our costs of living continue to skyrocket, our opportunities for good jobs continue to plummet, and our ability to survive as self-sufficient individuals and communities has never been so tenuous.

However, the pandemic has also shown us the utter weaknesses of global supply chains, which have been pushed to their absolute limits. Between that and the extreme carbon footprint of the global market, it has never been more clear how much we need local production, closed loop systems, and a re-emergence of the

commons. Should we see a brighter future, one where we are not indentured to an anti-life system exacerbating biosphere collapse; one where we are able to live as realized humans, not automatons for a faceless system; one in which stopping to smell the roses is not a luxury but commonplace – to see that world we must seize back the commons. We must make the land we inhabit a space for all to enjoy and prosper from. We must take back what is ours.

The future that is coming is not a pretty one. Many of us already feel like the lives we lead are illusions. How can our service jobs mean jack shit when the biosphere is collapsing, the topsoil is eroding, the already poisoned waterways are drying up, and there are microplastics pervading all of our bodies? This way of living is dying, and it weighs upon all of us, consciously or subconsciously. There is no more ignoring it, there is only action or death. If not the immediate death of the body, the death of the soul, of autonomy, of hopes, dreams, love, and beauty.

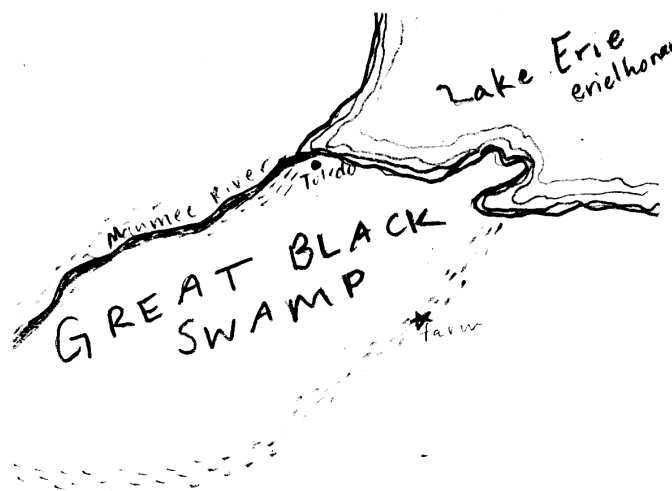
It is imperative that we young people of the world take action! There is no better way than to reappropriate that which belongs to the people. Like it or not, the next couple of decades will be defined by bloody struggles for land, water, and air. Should we begin the process of mobilization now, and of learning the essential skills of survival (farming and agroforestry, water harvesting, sustainable shelter building, toolmaking, clothes repair, nonviolent communication and community problem solving, living in harmony with the bioregion, alternative forms of energy production like biogas, etc), we have a real shot at reclaiming our small corner of this globe and seeding the possibility of a just and equitable world.
Are you in?

where we
are from

So often when first meeting folks around here, the conversation at some point turns to sharing about “where we are from.”

Right before moving to Seattle, I was working in what's now known as central Ohio, on a 15 acre farm run by a local couple on a family land plot. The land was home and hunting ground for members of the Haudenosaunee confederacy and Algonquian nations until they were killed or forced into reservation lands around the Revolutionary War. The triangular plot of land that I worked on was on a ridge where a highway now runs. The highway ridge marks the old border of the Great Black Swamp, a diverse ecosystem that included forests, grasslands, and wetlands so dense and dark in places that it was like a rainforest—not what we picture when we think about the Corn Belt today. In the 19th century, the old growth was felled to create a highway so that settlers could move westward.

Though many people who live in the Great Black Swamp today don't even know it, there is still a visible difference between the lush, dark soil of the former swamp, rich with organic material, and the soil that was right beyond its edge.



What did we lose by killing the Great Black Swamp? In the 1960's, Lake Erie was considered a "dead lake" because severe eutrophication, unchecked by the now-lost wetlands, led to large-scale algal blooms, making it uninhabitable for many animals. Additionally, peatland is the largest natural carbon store. Current peatland around the world stores more soil carbon than all other vegetation combined.

In peatland, the height of the surface of the ground fluctuates, largely as a response to water levels. Recently, satellites have allowed scientists to measure the surface fluctuations, and what we now understand is that healthy peatlands' high points occur in autumn, and the low point is in the spring. In other words, healthy bogs take one breath—one inhale, one exhale— every year.

I wonder, when did the Great Black Swamp take its last breath?

When people ask me where I'm from, I know they're asking for my home state, but it would feel more accurate to talk about my home lake, my home river, my home swamp, or the home swamp I might have lived in. Fuck the arbitrary political borders I grew up in, I want to talk about my relationship with water, with the first tree I learned to identify, with the killdeer whose call is so often in the background of my memories.

Robin Wall-Kimmerer writes: "Listening, standing witness, creates an openness to the world in which the boundaries between us can dissolve in a raindrop." Listening is a practice, a skill that is cultivated over time and deepened through reflecting on what we've observed. I become a better

witness when I hear those around me share their reflections, when I see that someone is exercising their attention in a way that is new to me. I become a better listener by seeking out those who are knowledge keepers in our spaces.

Once I was told about the Great Black Swamp, I couldn't stop searching for its spirit in my day to day. It was a similar feeling– of mourning, of revelation– when I learned what the original shape of the last few miles of the Duwamish River looked like, before colonizers forcibly straightened it to serve capitalism. Another Indigenous genocide, another ecosystem lost, the full scale and impact of which is hard to comprehend but the pain is immediate, deep. The spirits of the Great Black Swamp and the Duwamish River are still out there, they've lost much of their natural location, but their spirit remains tethered to the ancestral land through humans, through our ability for remembrance and capacity for reparation & restoration.

Mary Oliver: "Attention is the beginning of devotion." The point I'm trying to make is this: the way that we choose to share about "where we are from", whatever that means to each of us, is important. The decision to learn about the land matters. All our relations, as Lakota knowledge teaches us, matter. What would happen if we shed the trivial ways we sometimes speak about places we've called home and started sharing about the ecosystems that have sustained us?

Together, we generate common perceptions of how to be in a place. Our imaginations attune to each other, hopefully to create a world with homes to sustain all humans, rivers, and swamps.

Madrona crumble cake The Madrona neighborhood is named for the Pacific Madrone (*arbutus menziesii*), native to Cascadia. *Arbutus unedo*, also called the Strawberry Tree, is a relative of the Madrone often planted as a decorative shrub. Its distinct bumpy red berries ripen in fall and taste sort of like a cross between quince and mango. It can take time to learn how to tell which ones are ripe, which are mealy, and how to work with their odd texture to enjoy their unique flavor.



I live near Madrona, and it always seemed to me like an uppity neighborhood high on the hill. It was only when I looked up what a Madrona tree was and started researching more about the neighborhood that I learned it was actually once a center for the Black Panther movement in Seattle. Drills were conducted on the Madrona playfield and a free breakfast program was run out of the Madrona Presbyterian Church.

I made this recipe for my new housemates who moved in the fall to welcome them to the neighborhood. To me, it symbolizes everything I love about foraging: a celebration of being hyper-local and rooted in place, and how being curious about the more-than-human world often leads to a greater awareness of our local human community, strengthening shared knowledge and our collective memory.

Ingredients

For the Cake:

- 1/3 C butter (room temp)
- 1/2 C sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 C flour (AP or GF)
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp baking powder
- 1/4 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 C sour cream or yogurt
- 2 tsp vanilla
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- ~1.5 C madrona berries

For the Crumble Topping:

- 3/4 C flour (I like to use coconut flour if it's around)
- 1/4 C sugar
- 1 tb brown sugar
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/4 C butter (melted)

Directions

1. *Build the cake layer.* Grease 8x8 dish. In a bowl, beat together butter and sugar as light+fluffy as you can. Add in egg, mix until combined. Slowly add dry ingredients until just combined. Add remaining wet ingredients and mix until just combined. Pour into dish.
2. *Build the berry layer.* Slice berries in half and layer on top of cake batter.
3. *Top with crumble.* Mix dry ingredients for crumble. Drizzle butter over dry mixture and using a fork, stir together until crumbs form. Sprinkle crumbs over berries.
4. *Bake at 350F for 35ish mins.*

Adapted from gathervictoria.com



Stay connected with the Cascadia Urban-Rural Coalition to see what we're up to next.

Insta is where we share info about upcoming work parties, skill shares, and other things we're up to.

@cascadiaurc